

# GENERAL STAGE NEWS AND GOSSIP



May Day in "AROUND THE MAP" Eleanor Painter in "THE PRINCESS" and Vivienne Segal

ONE of the unsolvable mysteries of Broadway is the failure of the success of certain plays. Now and again a play is presented with the most flattering reviews, is received with the most enthusiastic plaudits of audiences, which, to the amazement of all, fails to attract the public.

Again another play, which is received on the opening night with lukewarm applause and treated with scorn by the reviewers, may at once jump into success. Presently the "standing room only" sign is hung on the outer wall.

Managers are at a loss to account for this condition of affairs. Sir Walter Scott seems to have given the matter some consideration, for he said in one of his novels, "A play, like a bill, is of no value until it is accepted." Tom Taylor, the playwright, seems to have come nearer the mark, for he said: "A play is like a cigar. If it is a failure no amount of puffing will make it draw; but if it is a success everybody wants a box."

After all, as Sir Walter Scott has said, a play is not a success until it draws audiences sufficient to pay expenses. The mere acclaim of a first night audience and the approval of the critics of the drama are no guarantee that after one week there will be a paying attendance.

Many plays have had an amount of puffing and the more they were puffed the smaller the audiences. One day somebody will come along and write of the psychology of the drawing power of a play.

How to account for this is going to require some neat work in psychology.

Another mystery of the playhouse yet unaccounted for is the fact that a play will often fail for weeks to attract the public, when suddenly on a given night the receipts will double or even triple. Once having reached this advanced figure it never seems to slip back into the old one.

This has happened often on Broadway many times. A late curious example is that of the case of "Hobson's Choice." Harold Brighouse's comedy now on view at the Comedy Theatre.

This comedy was produced for the first time in New York at the Princess Theatre on election day afternoon, November 2. It was moved on the following Monday night to the Comedy Theatre. The business at the Princess Theatre and for the first week at the Comedy was a disappointment to the managers. Here was a comedy that was praised in a most eulogistic manner by the reviewers and gave its audiences unqualified delight. Suddenly, last Tuesday night, the receipts doubled. In short, instead of playing to half a house almost every seat was disposed of at the box office. This happened on a night when the receipts at other playhouses around town were below normal. A psychologist will have some difficulty in explaining why it was on that given night "Hobson's Choice" should have, as they say in the theatre, "suddenly come to life" and, as Sir Walter Scott would have said, the "bill accepted."

It would have been a natural thing if the increase of attendance at "Hobson's Choice" would have been gradual; but instead of that it came

## THE BROOKLYN PLAYS.

The Majestic Theatre will this week give Brooklyn its first opportunity to see "A Pair of Silk Stockings" on the other side of the bridges. This company is headed by Samuel Sothern, who played the same role in London when this amusing farce was acted first. All of Brooklyn that wants to be amused this week should see this piece.

The Montauk Theatre has arranged its programme this week in accordance with the etiquette laid down for little children. They should be seen and not heard. "The Birth of a Nation," the wonderful picture spectacle which has been for a year at the Liberty Theatre, will be there this week.

On a single night, in short the tide turned and turned unexpectedly and for no known reason. If this had happened but once in the theatre it might be an occasion for surprise, but it is something that happens continuously. One can understand why "Hobson's Choice" should now be playing to capacity houses, but how does it come that nearly two weeks transpired after the opening before the public suddenly, as they say in society, "took it up?"

Managers find very often that the play will run along for months before the tide turns. One of the most remarkable cases of this kind was that of James MacArthur's dramatization of Ian MacLaren's "Beside the Bonny Briar Bush." The late Kirke La Shelle put this play on about fifteen years ago. It was presented for the first time in Boston at the Tremont Theatre, where it had a run of seven weeks. Kirke La Shelle used every known method to get the public to come to see this play. It was presented at the Republic Theatre in New York for several weeks. It had a four weeks run in Chicago, and despite the fact that the reviews were favorable and the audiences delighted with the drama every week showed a deficit, but Kirke La Shelle still believed in "Beside the Bonny Briar Bush." Nine months went by and every week showed a loss. The business ranged from \$300 to \$500 a night; but one night in Syracuse, N. Y., the receipts for some unknown reason jumped to \$1,100. From that night "Beside the Bonny Briar Bush" was a big money maker. It played return engagements in cities that had previously neglected it most woefully and almost every night the "Standing Room Only" sign was on view in the lobby.

Theatrical managers relate such instances as these with wonder and are

at an utter loss to account for the occasion of them. It is only when a play has a turning of the tide that they are willing, as in the case of "Hobson's Choice" and "Beside the Bonny Briar Bush," to disclose the facts to the public. Managers are willing to talk about their successes, but they don't care to dwell upon their failures.

stage last Sunday made some striking observations concerning the event. "I have too many business deals pending just at the moment," he said, "to venture testing the comparative hardness of that ice and my head, but forty years ago I would have liked nothing better than a spin with those wonderful little fairies of the ice Mr. Dillingham has brought over here to startle us."

"I have been all over the world, summer and winter. I never saw such a coterie of skating beauty as Mr. Brokaw has gathered here this afternoon. I doubt if such a gathering

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## LECTURES TO-NIGHT.

Dwight Elmendorf will show pictures and lecture about northern Italy at Carnegie Hall to-night and to-morrow afternoon. With colored views and much comment Mr. Elmendorf will lead his hearers over the Simpson Pass, and through the lakes of Maggiore, Lugano and Como to Milan; thence to Pavia, with its monumental Certosa in pure Renaissance, and to Pisa, with its ecclesiastical buildings, and finally to Rome, where the round of sightseeing will include the churches, palaces, ruins, squares, fountains and gardens. There will be motion pictures of the busy street life of the city and along the Appian Way. St. Peter's will be visited, and the art treasures of the Vatican Galleries will be pictured and described. The next and concluding lecture in the regular course will be "Southern Italy and Sicily."

To-night at the Candler Theatre Burton Holmes will continue his series of pictorial travelogues with "England From Lands End to the Lakes" as his subject. As the eyes of the entire world are centred on the conflicting nations, and as England occupies a prominent position in the front ranks of these, Mr. Holmes' subject is particularly timely. Beautifully colored photo scenes and an unusually interesting series of original motion pictures will not only show England as the Mecca of the tourist in times of peace but also in the present troublous times of war.

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skaters whose work is a revelation to me. I mean serious folk who merely skate for fun—society folk who have given this hard bit of work enough time to perfect themselves in many of its most difficult branches. There is a society leader of New York skating an extremely difficult spiral backward, in true sentimental style, her partner a teacher of skating in many of the best rinks of Switzerland. There